

# Consultant Calls For Overhauling School Facility Needs Survey, Finding Alternative Funding For School Construction, Renovation

*By Katherine Joyce for NCASA*

The current process for determining school facility needs statewide should be overhauled, and alternative sources of funding public school construction and renovation should be identified, according to the consulting firm hired to review this issue for the General Assembly's Program Evaluation Division (PED).

MGT of America Consulting presented their year-long research on facility needs in nine selected school districts to the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee on Monday.

MGT spokesmen highlighted for the committee their evaluation methodology and the program-based model used to determine building capacity and utilization, as well as other funding needs for the selected county districts, which include Anson, Bertie, Clay, Davie, Greene, Harnett, Jones, Scotland and Yancey. Their evaluation matrix includes in-depth assessments on educational programming sustainability, technology readiness, and building and site conditions.

The MGT researchers found total facility needs of \$630,202,078 in the nine districts, with the largest need of \$239,201,908 in Harnett County Schools.

The average per-student investment needed in the nine districts to address the facility needs is \$18,180, with \$37,714 needed per student in Anson County and \$34,775 needed per student in Jones County, according to the MGT findings.

The findings also indicate that the average local tax rate in the nine districts is \$0.90, while the statewide average local tax rate is \$.066. In four of the school systems reviewed by MGT – Anson, Bertie, Jones and Scotland – the local tax rate exceeds \$1.05.

MGT provided both short-term and long-term recommendations for addressing school facility needs in North Carolina.

The short-term focus should include a “systematic review of the administration of DPI's School Facility Needs Survey and the process of implementation at the LEA level,” according to MGT. Their researchers indicated that the current process of school districts self-reporting their school facility needs every five years is likely not capturing all the needs in every district and thereby does not convey to policymakers or the public the real amount of funding and support needed to improve facility conditions in the local schools. The latest school facility needs survey identified roughly \$8 billion in construction and renovation needs in school districts statewide.

As for long-term recommendations for next steps, MGT suggests:

1. Potentially establish a revolving fund account
2. Alternative funding sources, such as those used in some other states
3. Consistent methodology for determining need, and
4. Prioritization of need.

Co-Chair Rep. Craig Horn, R-Union, asked the committee to review the report more in-depth and prepare to delve deeper into it at a later time. He said he and new Committee Co-Chair Sen. Brent Jackson, R-Sampson, do not feel it is appropriate to move the MGT recommendations to legislative action in the form of bill drafting yet.

Presentation materials can be found [here](#).